

Why have you trimmed the branches on the trees along the road, especially the ones that are above the road? We like the tunnel effect, and don't the trees belong to me anyway?

Most of us view the road from a passenger automobile. As spring starts putting on those beautiful green leaves, or the evergreen branches grow another foot or so, we enjoy the effect of the filtered light through the boughs. The cozy effect from the closeness of the branches gives us a nice feeling. County Engineers often hear “Why in the dickens does the Road Crew trim these branches? They’re beautiful and not hurting anybody!”

No, we aren’t just trying to take away your pretty roadway, we kind of like it too. But there are other users whose needs you may not always think about on that pretty spring morning. And they affect your lives too! Take a look at a few.

It is 2:00 in the morning. You are a member of the volunteer fire department. The alarm comes and you respond to the station with a few others. You start down the road in the 5-ton pumper truck. Lights flashing and siren screaming you head for your neighbor’s house. As you drive down the road with the beautiful overhanging branches the first thing to go is the light bar. Next are the side mirrors, and hopefully not a windshield. Boy, wait until I get back and burn the County Engineers ears. We need at least 14 feet of clearance to run a truck this size!

It’s the first snowstorm of the season. Snow has been coming down for a couple of hours now. The snow is on everything and getting deeper. It is time to start plowing the roads. You have been working about 12 hours straight. You have almost finished your route. You turn down the lane and behold a mass of branches weighted down with snow about windshield high. How are you going to plow this road? Not without knocking off the snow first so that the branches will spring up for clearance. If you leave the lane and come back later, and it keeps snowing, there will be broken branches all over the road. What do you do?

It’s 6:30 AM and you head out to work. It was cold last night and that wet roadway has turned to ice under those trees. You ease carefully out your driveway onto the county road. What’s this?! The sand truck hasn’t been through all night! How am I going to get to work and not run off the road? What is wrong with those Road Crews? Don’t they know people have to get to work?

There are many reasons open up the roadway, usually for safety. We are always looking for the best way to keep your roadside looking nice and still be safe for all the users. Check with your County Engineer about the practices in your area.

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Questions about this article, or any of the series, or on other topics related to County Roads, may be directed either to your County Engineer, or to Al King, P.E., County Road Administration Board, Olympia, at Al@CRAB.Wa.Gov.